

PRESSURE DEFENSE

by Matthew Brophy

I appreciate the opportunity to formally present the philosophy of defense myself and my brother in coaching, Brad Verdon, helped develop at Davenport Central High School. I have found that there are many ways to accomplish a goal and as you go through life you will find very few absolute "right" or "wrong" answers. As they say, "there is more than one way to skin a cat". I'm not exactly sure why you'd want to skin a cat, but I believe you can learn about football by studying teams that do things differently more than you can those that do exactly what you do. I will preface this article with the acknowledgement that "my way" is not the only way to do things, but it is the way in which I find the most natural and simplest to teach to players.

Pressure defense is not so much a scheme solution as it is an attitude. It is an attitude that permeates through every facet of a defensive unit. Aggression as an attitude is simply an expression of confident Alpha-male dominance. There is only one way I am aware of to develop this kind of mentality than through the off-season weight room and by stroking the fragile masculine egos of 15 - 17 year old males. Pubescent males search and explore avenues to express their surging testosterone impulses through the mimicking of their male role models. We want to ride this natural momentum by providing and rewarding avenues of positive aggressive activities (off season athletics, weight room participation, driven self-improvement through competition). We want to create opportunities for young men to find their style of leadership and accepting responsibility for their peer's success. By creating a competitive environment that rewards young men that accept challenges, our players no longer wish to hide in pressure situations, but win-or-lose will look forward to contests to prove themselves.

We support our offense and special teams as a sibling and/or partner in football, but we create an Espirit De Corps by selling our players that "Offensive players are nice, but if they were any good they'd be on DEFENSE!"

Personnel

You can't be aggressive and force mistakes without speed. Of all the mismatches found on the football field, the single component that cannot be masked is the ability to move.

One thing we have found that works for us is evaluating personnel in the spring weight room and Track program. Your key defensive players will be the one most active in the weight room. Those are the guys you can trust, those are the guys who have invested in the sake of the program.

I believe your most versatile athletes must be played. If you don't have a position for the player to get on the field, then create one. In the off season, you must build as much momentum for your defense prior to the regular season by focusing your efforts toward personnel decisions and possibilities. Find the most active, aggressive, and trustworthy competitors on your team and throw them on the first defense. You will likely find you have 7 or 8 linebacker types - kids who are aggressive and athletic.

Keep an open mind, be creative yourself, and remember that players make plays - prototypical characteristics don't make play. In the 40 defense you can make all your adjustments through the tweaking of your outside personnel - usually your WOLB and your SS or SOLB. When creating your defense, you must set clearly defined roles for your personnel. Are you going to be a Cover 2 team, a man-to-man team, a Cover 3 team, etc?

Since the conference we play in caters to the running game, we want to stop the run first and foremost. Because of that, we want to get into an 8-man front. We can do so via our Cover 3 alignment. In Cover 3, the most difficult responsibility lies on the outside linebacker who is perimeter run force and covers the curl-to-flat zones. These two positions, the SOLB and the WOLB, are the two critical spots where we want the most savvy and athletic player. Because our strong side players are primarily concerned with stopping the run, the SOLB can be a little stouter and physical. Our WOLB is our most versatile player and the crux of our defense. He will fill the role of a Strong Safety on the weak side. We have used this player as our head hunter, protect him, and have used him to single-bracket the best player on the opposing offense, and also featured him in some of our more exotic blitz packages.

We have taken our most active defensive players the previous year (all linebackers) and FOUND positions where they could play. Most of our defensive ends were originally safeties or outside linebackers. We have found that to become a pressure defense, speed & quickness among our defensive line to be more valuable than strength.

If a kid can play football, he can play football. You will find that if that player can move, be aggressive, and know an assignment, your ability to be multiple or otherwise be a multifaceted unpredictable threat to your opponent. If your defensive backs can assume linebacker roles, your linebackers can assume defensive lineman roles and defensive linemen can assume linebacker roles - the capacity for your defense can be multiplied.

The key to successful defense is predicated in stopping the opponents run game. The foundation of run defense starts inside out - starting from the center and working our way outside. The nose tackle in our defense is used to create as many problems for an offense as possible. We do this through crowding the ball, mixing alignments, as well as various line stunts. Size isn't the overwhelming characteristic here, but hip explosion is. Some of our more successful nose tackles have been 150lbs wrestlers, whose quickness and explosiveness create havoc in the backfield.

By exploring each player's unique abilities, a coaching staff are able to isolate functions each player is capable of performing. A player who may have difficulty learning a variety of responsibilities can hone in on one facet of defensive play and become a defined role in situational defense.

Our defensive line and our outside linebackers are what truly make up the pressure element of our defense. We do not feature very large players among the defensive front. First of all, we are not routinely blessed with hulking athletes and we believe that a big fat kid who is overweight, who has a high body fat composition, will likely tire too soon and become unreliable as the game wears on. We want our linemen hustling and firing through gaps. Because they are not as stout, we do not want to be sitting ducks and trying to outmuscle our opponents. We rely on explosive get-offs and escape moves as well as line stunts and stemming. You can't block what you can't hit. Get-offs, separation, and escapes are worked daily as fundamental work along the defensive line. In certain situations (goal line / short-yardage), we do substitute with our larger linemen, who typically play on offense.

We invest a lot of time developing well-rounded linebackers. We base our lesson plans from the start of camp to the regular season to train them in nuances of defensive back work, shedding blocks, pass rushing, and defensive line skills. They will play the most versatile positions in our defense. Because we want to be attacking offenses and never hesitate at the snap, we play our linebackers with their heels at 5 - 4.5 yards from the line of scrimmage. We feel this gives us an edge in attacking the line of scrimmage, staying clear of 'trash' from the line play, seeing open lanes, reading keys, and making it more challenging to be reached by larger offensive linemen..

We expect 13 hits on the Quarterback by the 3rd quarter. Most of your game plan will be built off of stopping the running game. Stopping the running game early can afford your offense time to operate as well as provide a psychological lift for your defense. We want to sack, tackle, or make physical contact with the quarterback 13 times during the first 30 offensive snaps of the opponent. Studies have shown that the propensity for mistakes by the quarterback after being physically rattled early in the ball game. By molesting and harassing the quarterback, you have put a 17 year old boy in a tremendously stressful situation - he has to be the sole individual to lead your opponent to a comeback. By diminishing the leadership of your opponent, you reduce the number of threats you must defend.

We take great pride in developing aggressive pursuit on defense and also create a special unit exclusively for passing downs / 2 minute defense. We call this special unit our GATA package. Our GATA unit has one purpose only - to get to the quarterback as quickly as possible. GATA stands for Get After Their Asses, and we intend to do just that. We have used defensive backs as defensive ends and track sprinters as interior

defensive linemen. We can rep a few stunts and have a player hone in on one task, aligning in a track stance and racing to the drop of a quarterback and let his athleticism take over.

We develop an attitude of striving for perfection by grading our performances. We film all scrimmages as well as certain skelly practices and inside-drills. All games and scrimmages are graded and reviewed on the following practices. We post the 'grades' of our performance for three days after our game. The public viewing of individual evaluations serves as a badge of honor for those that participated as well as a benchmark for the players to improve on. We feature grades on various responsibilities as well as their game statistics, and conclude with coaching points for each performing player's edification. The most important stat on the evaluation sheet is tracking LOAFS. A loaf is the wart of a defense. It cannot be accepted or tolerated. If a loaf occurs during a contest (player not moving toward the ball before the whistle) that player has become a liability to his team and his behavior cannot go unpunished. Anyone with more than 2 loafs in a game will be benched until he shows the ability to be counted on by his teammates. Loafs represent a lack of urgency on the part of the defense and a lack of conditioning (both mental and physical). We can change a lack of conditioning through more team runs at the end of practice.

Teaching

We know that sometimes the nuances of the game of football can be mind-numbing to kids not familiar with the X's and O's. Therefore, we never assume our players know exactly what we are asking of them so we look to deliver a message in two or three different styles. We can tell them what to do, draw it on the chalkboard, show them with video, and walk through on the field. Because support on the field is so vital to an aggressive defense, we require all our defensive players be able to align the entire defense and explain their gap assignment. The extra time invested helps our players adjust to any position changes that may occur as well get a complete understanding of their teammate's roles. We don't just want kids following orders; we want players knowing how to play. Also, we take that same approach to seeing how plays develop on the field. With the generations of youth today being raised in a video age dependent on recognizing looping patterns, we use video cutups of our opponents to drill tendencies based on formations and field position. Creating this intuitive sense in our players who typically don't come from football backgrounds helps tremendously on Friday nights. Kids today are so visually stimulated that we use various forms of media to illustrate our teaching points routinely. We use college cutups, NFL cutups, scenes from popular movies, and images from mass-market media to convey messages to our players.

Fundamental defense

There is no magic bullet, no beat-all-coverage to make a defense effective. A house without a foundation cannot stand. A defense must be built soundly on basic football fundamentals; *tackling and pursuit*.

Form tackling must be drilled daily - even if it's for only 5 minutes, placing a high emphasis on tackling instills confidence and pride within your players and sends a statement that nothing else is more important (so they'd better pay attention). Daily repetitions gives an unlimited number of opportunities for ALL players to 'prove themselves' to the coaches and each other. Constant physical contact, while not needing to be brutally violent, instills a physical mentality and cultivates a psychology of 'toughness' and helps each defensive player find his identity as a 'tough guy'. Players can come from various backgrounds and creeds, they don't have to hang out after practice or be 'friends', but they all must respect one another's 'toughness' on the field. 'Toughness' on defense is the badge of honor each player carries and must prove to his comrades at each contest.

Pursuit

Speed without purpose or urgency is useless on the field. We use various pursuit drills to emphasize the importance of hustle as well as a tool to teach fits, support, and responsibilities. Pursuit drills are quick and high tempo. This pace lends itself to a high energy atmosphere = fun. If you have 11 players or 50 players,

break them down into various units, regardless of their position on the depth chart, and challenge each group to be the best, loudest, and most enthusiastic bunch on the field when they are participating. The more you initiate a pursuit drill early in the season, the more momentum you build up for the regular season. The pursuit drill should not last more than 30 minutes - any more may be overkill and lose the intensity, stalling all momentum stored up. Pursuit should be a tool used for classical conditioning, which enthusiasm and hitting the field go hand in hand. If your players take the field without enthusiasm it should, through conditioning, feel 'unnatural' for them. Create an environment of high intensity, of anticipation, that in only a few moments a big play will be made.

In the initial days of camp, we work proper huddle procedure and alignment, emphasizing high-tempo hustle.

Once aligned properly the coach will simulate quarterback play and run, pitch, or pass the ball to any spot on the field. Once the ball has stopped progress, we have all players swarm the ball as fast as possible and chop their feet until the last defensive player arrives. Upon the last player arriving, the unit breaks down with great enthusiasm and exits the playing field on the coach's command. Any one member not hustling or "loafing" will cause the entire group to repeat the drill. Early on we teach our players about body language and physical conditioning to influence a psychological response. "If you aren't there - fake it until you make it", is what we tell our kids to remind them that even if they don't 'feel like it', they must at least PRETEND to be excited by displaying the physical characteristics of enthusiasm (yelling, chanting, running, and celebrating).

Our pursuit drills can be utilized and adapted throughout the season to practice option responsibilities (and flow), formation recognition, high-tempo front / coverage checks.

Loafs - this is the most heinous offense a defensive player can commit on the field. This must be drilled every day that your defense meets on the field. Your linemen are going to get tired - you must keep them fresh as best as you can with continued rotation throughout a game. Allowing a separate position coach to be responsible for this task can create a directed handle on the pulse of the line and develop ownership for that coach in the program.

Turnovers

Stressing possession of the ball is what turnovers are about. Tackling and big hits are great and look exciting, but typically they also mean that the opponent retains possession of the football.

We teach the fundamentals of turnovers early on through recovery, stripping, punching, tipping, breaking on the ball, and catching the football and stress the importance of obtaining possession of the football. We are not looking for tackles of opponents; we are looking to attack the football.

One thing we have used to break the monotony and keep the defense on their toes is to offer a "big play" or turnover quota every day in practice. This is a just a quota needed to be made by the end of practice - it could be a fumble recovery or an interception. On some days, we've counted sacks and forced fumbles as well. Any time we secure the football on defense during practice, players are required to advance the ball for a score. We cover field position ball security later in the later practices.

If the quota number is not made, the remainder (plays made - quota) will be made up with after practice with the conditioning plan du jour. Some days the quota may be 1, others it may be as high as 15. There does not need to be any rhyme or reason to the number. The point is to emphasize that turnovers can happen at anytime and there may be times when a turnover is essential to winning a ball game. Nothing motivates a team of players like knowing they can avoid physical conditioning if they meet certain criteria. Because of these 'high-stakes' challenges, the impact of each turnover is immediately realized by the team and the player that acquires the big play or turnover, is rewarded as a hero by his team mates. Whenever a turnover or big play happens, no matter how many times it happens, we have a tradition that has EVERY defensive player pat that player on the helmet to thank him for the spectacular play. Affirmation and accolades from your peers is an invaluable motivator, and works wonders to build a player's confidence.

Speed & Tackling on defense is what makes 'pressure defense' viable. If your athletes cannot get to the point of attack (speed) any firepower is useless. If your athletes can get to your opponent but cannot stop them (tackling) your advantage is lost and your team is demoralized.

Speed on defense is actually taught every day by teaching players to "play fast". We rep and rep and rep situations without over-criticizing effort to continue to nurture aggressive attitude and taking chances. We rep run-throughs during group times early on in the season and utilize trash cans with an exaggerated yard split between them. We only two speeds; walk-through and full-speed. We will generally walk and talk on Mondays to the point of point of boredom - everyone gets reps to get a feel for what is required. Come Tuesday and Wednesday, everything is full speed. Drills and reactions are explained on Monday and what is required throughout the week.

Tackling is something we take great pride in. We may only work tackling 5 minutes a day, it may be a one-step form tackle, but it is still emphasizing the fundamentals of defense. We feel that form-tackling to a defensive player is the paramount of scales to a musician. It is your warm up; it is your foundation of how you become creative. Every day we work a period known as "**Winning Edge**" where we work four drills of basic defensive fundamentals. These are basic one or two-step movements that are worked at a high-tempo and that we can rep continuously with minimal pause. This period consists of four blocks of five minutes where we hit drill to drill and do very little talking. Constant coaching points are given on each rep and encouragement is giving liberally. We stress violent movement in the execution in each drill. Drills we work on can be; form tackling, ball carrier stripping, pass tipping, block destruction, 3 on 2, zone break on ball, backpedaling (M drill), zone drops, bag separation, get offs, flow read, etc.

Nuts & Bolts

Fronts

The most important tenet on defense you and your staff must realize is that your Coverage determines your Front. It all must work together - you cannot play Cover 3 with both corners in press technique and roll your SS up in the box - putting your players in position to make plays is as important as teaching them how to tackle. Continue to preach this tenet to your players. Stress alignment and how it affects their ability to defend a formation. Stress how the assignment is directly related to their alignment. Stress how their assignment is inner-related to others around them - seeing and understanding where their support is located.

This tenet leads us to the simplicity of our defense. We have three basic coverages; Cover 3, Cover 2, and Cover 6 (our loaded zone package). Each of these coverages directly affect our fronts, therefore our coverage and front calls are inter-related. If we want an eight-man front, we will be in Cover 3. Our front AND coverage call can be summed up in the single call, "3".

Our loaded zone defense puts us in a 4-3 front, known as "6". If we want to play a COVERAGE different than our front we will add a second digit to dictate the coverage after the original front call (i.e. "62" 4-3 front with Cover 2 coverage - "31" 4-4 front with Man free coverage).

Because of the versatility of our interior linemen and the fact that we emphasize gap penetration and not physical matchups along the line, we do not need to flip them according to strength. We can have our 1 technique play a 3 and visa versa. We can alter our fronts and play an under front with just the front call of "under" ("62 under" / "6 under"). Another versatile front we have used allows us to play a 5-3 or 3-4 type defense. We can shift our entire defensive line strong or weak (5,0,5,9) with the call "Wide" (shift to strength) or "Slide" (shift to weak side). This front allows our ILB to get clear guard reads, but most importantly give an advantage to our edge rushers shifted to the ghost 9 position. We have found this alignment to be very advantageous in situational downs against offenses with one-back and Pro-I formations.

'3'
(4-2)

Position	Alignment / Technique	Gap	Key Responsibilities	Focus
Edge	weakside 6 tech	"C"	to gap to ball / away / chase	outside rush
Nose	weakside 1 tech	"A"	to gap to ball / away / squeeze	inside rush
Tackle	strongside 1 tech	"B"	to gap to ball / away / squeeze	inside rush
Rush	strongside 6 tech	"C"	to gap to ball / away / squeeze	inside rush
Devil	strongside 5/6 'loose'	"D"	max after alignment based on alignment	to D gap or ball / away / outside
Will	weakside 30 tech	"E"	must be fast read / leg	to B gap or ball / away / outside
Sam	strongside 20 tech	"A"	must be slow read / scrape type	to B gap or ball / away / outside
Rover	weakside 5/6 'loose'	"A"	must be fast read / leg	to D gap or ball / away / outside
Strong Corner	8 x 2 - outside leverage	"A"	pressing cushion / outside / athlete	to outside force / away / pursuit
Weak Corner	8 x 2 - inside leverage	"A"	pressing cushion / outside / athlete	to outside force / away / pursuit
Free Safety	12 yds deep, middle of field	"E"	allow player on outside run	allow both ways

'6'
(4-3)

Position	Alignment / Technique	Gap	Key Responsibilities	Focus
Edge	weakside 6 tech	"C"	to gap to ball / away / chase	corner & rush
Nose	weakside 1 tech	"A"	to gap to ball / away / squeeze	inside rush
Tackle	strongside 3 tech	"B"	to gap to ball / away / squeeze	inside rush
Rush	strongside 5 or 6 tech	"C"	to gap to ball / away / squeeze	corner & rush
Devil	60 tech inside TE	"D"	fast read on TE / no route	to B gap or ball / away / outside
Will	weakside 40 to 50 tech	"E"	to B gap or ball / away / outside	to B gap or ball / away / outside
Sam	strongside 10 tech - 00	"A"	must be fast read / leg type	to B gap or ball / away / outside
Rover	weakside 5/6 'loose'	"A"	allow player on outside run	allow strong side
Strong Corner	8 x 2 - outside leverage	"A"	must force everything inside - fast / pressing cushion / outside / athlete	to outside force / away / pursuit
Weak Corner	8 x 2 - inside leverage	"A"	pressing cushion / outside / athlete	allow weak side
Free Safety	12 yds deep, middle of field	"E"	allow player on outside run	allow strong side

'6 UNDER'
(4-3)

Position	Alignment / Technique	Gap	Key Responsibilities	Focus
Edge	weakside 6 tech	"C"	to gap to ball / away / chase	corner & rush
Nose	weakside 3 tech	"A"	to gap to ball / away / squeeze	inside rush
Tackle	strongside 6 tech	"B"	to gap to ball / away / squeeze	inside rush
Rush	strongside 6	"C"	to gap to ball / away / squeeze	corner & rush
Devil	60 tech inside TE	"D"	fast read on TE / no route	to B gap or ball / away / outside
Will	weakside 20	"E"	to B gap or ball / away / outside	to B gap or ball / away / outside
Sam	strongside 30 tech	"A"	must be fast read / leg type	to B gap or ball / away / outside
Rover	weakside 5/6 'loose'	"A"	allow player on outside run	allow strong side
Strong Corner	8 x 2 - outside leverage	"A"	must force everything inside - fast / pressing cushion / outside / athlete	to outside force / away / pursuit
Weak Corner	8 x 2 - inside leverage	"A"	pressing cushion / outside / athlete	allow weak side
Free Safety	12 yds deep, middle of field	"E"	allow player on outside run	allow strong side

STRENGTH TO NUMBERS

propensity to run to the tight end side. In the past, we have faced teams with tight ends that proved a physical personnel mismatch that we cannot overcome. In those instances, we have used a call "Invert" that switched alignments of the SOLB and the Rush defensive end. Because the tight ends we faced us so effective in the passing game, we would use the SOLB to bear crawl across the knees of the tight end and take him out of a route, while the Rush defensive end pursues on his pass rush.

From our Cover 2 package, we use a **Cover 4** package sparingly, where we give up greater ground and do not reroute the #1 receiver. We typically invert the safeties at 10 yards and have them jump any inside developing routes and be aggressive in run support. Our underneath linebackers do not carry receivers, but do look to reroute any receivers to prevent undue stress on deep help. If in extremely long yardage situations, we will play Cover 4 and may even send the MLB for additional pressure.

Lastly, we include a **Robber coverage** in its simplest form. Since we pattern read heavily out of our Cover 3 package, our corners bail at the snap to maintain their cushion on the #1 receiver, essentially bailing to deep half zone coverage and will take their respective receiver man-to-man on any vertical route. Our underneath zone defenders play the same Cover 3 zone drops and reads. The free safety is the main change up in our Robber coverage. As we teach him in Cover 3, he keys the #2 strong side receiver (tight end) and looks to jump him immediately. If the tight end releases vertically, we want the free safety to take him man to man. If the tight end breaks inside and behind the linebackers, we want the free safety to jump his route and take him man-to-man. If the tight end releases inside in front of the linebacker, we'll have the free safety gain depth and look for the inside breaking post by the strong side #1. If the tight end releases outside, we have the free safety gain depth and look to jump the backside breaking post of the weak #1.

From our Cover 3 / Robber package / look, we move into our **check blitz**. On defense, we typically break the team down daily with a chorus of "Big Nasty" which is an attitude we share that embodies a take-no-prisoner approach to competition looking for an aggressive big hit and self-assured swagger. "Nasty" is the name of our check blitz. We emphasize the simplicity of the matchups and assignments. We align exactly like our Cover 3, but press the receivers in Zero coverage.

CB = #1

FS = #2 strong

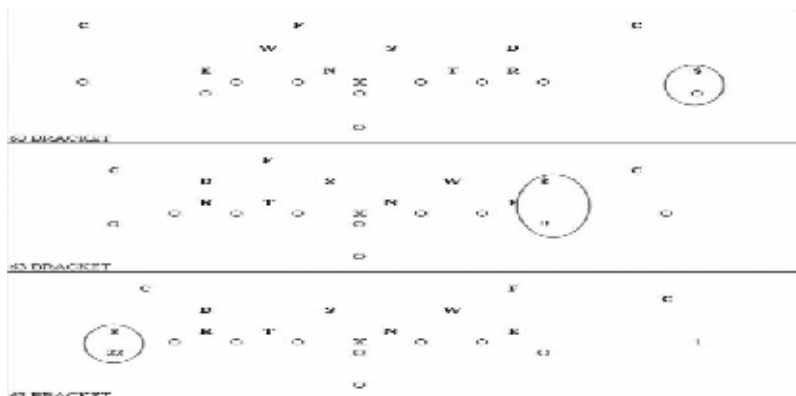
Rover = #2 weak

Sam / Rush = "you-me" call on #3 receiver strong. If he doesn't clear, we push to QB.

Will / Edge = "you-me" call on #3 receiver weak. If he doesn't clear, we push to QB.

Our check blitz is one of our player's favorite calls in the defense because it is simple and aggressive and usually results in big plays for the defense.

We have faced unique and game-breaking players in the past and have used special adjustments to defend against phenomenal single-player threats. We use our Rover in bracket coverage against a spectacular player. We can either double-cover or get an exclusive matchup out of a Cover 3 look. Our 30 bracket coverage puts us in our 3 front playing man-to-man across the board with the Rover playing loose coverage over the identified threat. Our 63 Bracket, we align in our 6 front and play Cover 3 behind it and Cover 4 underneath, with the Rover taking the identified threat man-to-man, wherever he goes.



Goal line

We strive to keep our goal line adjustments as simple as possible as the margin of error becomes slighter with limited real estate to defend. Keeping our alignments and assignments consistent with our base defense is our goal. We play a Gap 8 defense and either can play man-to-man or zone. We typically do not jump into a goal line set until our opponent enters our 7 yard line. Inside the 14, we can play a 4-3, two-deep, man under ("62 SuperMan"). Our Gap 8 simply aligns the front 6 players into their respective gaps. The front four defensive linemen are in a 4-point tails-in-the-air gap charge, rooting to the heels of the offensive linemen.

N & T = A gap

R & E = B gap

D & W = C gap

MLB = #3

Rover & FS = #2

Corners = #1

Because our Edge player is extremely versatile and is a converted linebacker, we take him off the line and substitute him with a second Rush lineman. The Edge becomes the Rover and the first Rover becomes the Free Safety.

30 GOAL LINE (GAP 8) MAN	
DL	In gap - 4 pt gap charge "B" to "B"
SC	Man on #1 strongside
FS	Man on #2 Strongside
S	3 yds depth on nearest back (FB) scrapes C to C
\$	4 yds depth on far back (TE) scrapes - takes #2 weak
W	3pt in C weak gap - charge to QB
D	3pt in C strong gap - charge to QB
WWC	Man on #2 backfield / #2 weakside
65 GOALINE (GAP 8) ZONE	
DL	In gap - 4 pt gap charge "B" to "B"
C	5 yds depth on #1 his side (any receiver threat, wing, flanker, etc) inside leverage press technique - fall to FLAT zone
S	3 yds deep - B to B run scrape - drop to middle hole
D	head up on EMOL - attack QB
W	head up on EMOL - attack QB
FS	strong side 50 4 yds deep - B to Outside run force - fall to CURL
SS	weak side 50 4 yds deep - B to Outside run force - fall to CURL

Stunts

I will provide a basic overview of our stunts and blitzes. All labels are named for an aggressive connotation and use a letter or series of letters to denote who it affects.

TARE= Tackle before Rush

RAT = Rush before Tackle

NUT = Nose before Tackle

TON = Tackle before Nose

FRONT ALIGNMENTS			INSIDE BACKER STUNTS			
ST Blow Blows off E T M S S A R N	FACE Blow Blows off R T F E N S I R	SOFT Blow Blows off E T M S S O S O N	WILL Blow Blows off E T M S S A X F R	WILL away Blow Blows off R T F E O S X F R	WILL nose Blow Blows off E T M S O N R S N	WILL line Blow Blows off R T M S N R S N
SMOKE Blow Blows off E T M S S A R U U	LOOSE Blow Blows off H T F E U S I M R	TIGHT Blow Blows off E T M S U S I M R	RAM Blow Blows off E T M S U S I M R	RAM away Blow Blows off R T F E U S I M R	RAM nose Blow Blows off E T M S U S I M R	RAM line Blow Blows off R T M S U S I M R
LINE Blow Blows off Y E T M S C O S E O D	SLIDE Blow Blows off F H T M S O D I O S	FLARE Blow Blows off E T M S O O X O D	SECONDARY STUNTS			
LINE Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D			DEFL Blow Blows off E T M S D O X I O	NOVE Blow Blows off E T M S D H S T R	DOUBLE DOG Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	BLAZE Blow Blows off E T M S D H S T R
DOUBLE Blow Blows off A O T M S Y S O S E O D	BBQ Blow Blows off A O T M S Y S O S E O D	T Blow Blows off E T M S O O X O D	IN naming our stunts, we want to keep the terminology short, relevant to the persons involved with aggressive connotation. Because tackle calls can be quick, rushed, or garbled during an intense series, we want each call to be distinctive not to be confused with another call, causing confusion / miscommunication.			
LINE STUNTS			COMBO STUNTS			
Tag Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	Angle Blow Blows off R T F E D I O S	Circle Blow Blows off E T M S S O X O D	HAY Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	STUD Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	SAW Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	SHIRT Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D
Trap Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	Goal Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	Loop Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	Swing Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	SWEEP Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D		
GAP EXCHANGE STUNTS						
TARE Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	TON Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	NOVE Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D				
RAT Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	NUT Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D	FACE Blow Blows off E T M S D O S E O D				

On linebacker blitzes we simply call out the name of the backer so there's no confusion and he blitzes his assigned gap. If we want him to blitz a different gap, we label it with an Alpha character call side or Alpha "away" backside.

If it's a double blitz, we will use a label much like the linemen stunts, using both letters of the players affected.

Because we feature so many quality athletes, we can utilize their versatility with zone / fire blitzes.

Exchange = Edge switches assignment with OLB his side

Rex = Rush switches assignment with OLB his side

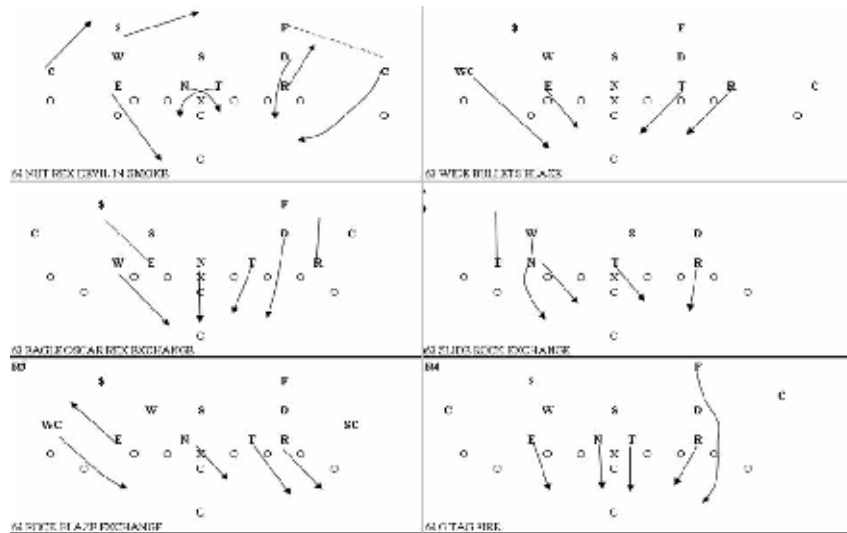
Our secondary blitzes are based out of a Cover 3 look (1/4, 1/4, 1/2) with a Smoke (strong corner), Blaze (weak corner), and Fire (free safety), because we are playing a three-deep coverage we don't need to check out of these blitzes.

Against spread teams or long-yardage downs when the middle screen or draw can be a threat we will execute a interior line call to play a passive lineman to spy at the line of scrimmage to prevent a big play up the middle of the defense.

"Loose" = Tackle engages lineman and holds point at the LOS.

"Soft" = Nose engages lineman and holds point at the LOS.

Pressure on defense is created when your players are allowed to play with confidence and creativity. We want to build our players into understanding offensive pattern recognition. We want to show blitz when we are zone dropping, we want to show zone drop when we intend to blitz - we always want to allow the offense an opportunity to second guess themselves.



Practices

Because we platoon, we are able to devote and organize our time to the benefit of our players. We operate on a 4 day practice schedule during the season. We have evolved from a both-ways system, to a two-platoon system for the success of the program. With the two-platoon system, we are benefited with the ability to keep more athletes out (low attrition), higher level of specialization and coaching (better teaching), more organized practices and more intense reps for all players.

Mondays are our game planning days. We watch film, point out elements that we did well and need to improve on. We then watch scouting cutups of our opponent. We watch their base plays (show plays they look good at) and formations and talk about how we plan to handle them. We then draw up the base offense of our opponent on the grease board and give an overview of how we are game planning for them and any new stunts, fronts, coverages, or blitzes for the week. After breaking, in shells, we hit the field for stretch, perform a 10 minute block of defensive movement fundamentals, and then perform a walk-thru going over all the elements of the game plan and formation recognition. This is our cerebral or 'thinking' practice. We want the players thinking and absorbing as much as they can on Monday. We conclude practice with a high-tempo pursuit drill and weight lifting.

Prepractice - stretch - conditioning - winning edge drills - individuals - group - team - conclusion.

Tuesday and Wednesday are our 'banging' days. We are going to be as physical as possible and work tackling and other basic defensive fundamentals. On Tuesday, we go over scripted 1st & 2nd down situations and conclude practice with a 2 minute drill. On Wednesday, we go over scripted 3rd & short, 3rd & long, work our planned blitz packages and goal line situations. Practice concludes with two separate scripted goal line sessions.

Thursday is pre game walk through to finalize our game plan. Defensive calls are finalized and the wristbands are given to the defensive captains and linebackers and the calls are practiced. Defense goes through a 30 minute block reviewing every situational call and every call on the wrist coach. Practice concludes with a 5 minute pursuit drill and a half-way decent joke.

Friday pre game, we draw our defense together and again reiterate our keys to the game, any special adjustments being made for this game, personnel substitution, and our goal line scenarios. As a staff, we explain what needs to happen for us to WIN the game on defense (irregardless of any offensive production), use visualization to provide a psychological crescendo, then leave the defensive players to themselves for 2 minutes for them to conclude / make peace with themselves prior to the kickoff.

Game planning

What will take them out of their comfort zone?

As tedious as it sounds, we draw up all their plays and draw up all our fronts & coverages and blitzes. How does it all look on paper? We want to leave no stone unturned - we want to shoot as many holes in our defense before the contest to be as sure as we possibly can before Friday night. What would look 'good' on paper on stopping the opponent? What worked for their previous opponents?

Break tendencies and philosophies based on field position? Red zone, green zone, inside our 50, from their 30 - 45?

Who is the weakest lineman and how do they protect him? From this we will design a blitz package to take advantage of their weakest link in conjunction with their protection scheme. What do they tip off?

Peculiar formations? If they only run one or two plays out of a certain formation, we will game plan an AFC (Automatic Front Call) that regardless of what is called in the huddle, once we recognize the formation, we will check to a particular defense. An example would be when our opponent will use a Power-I formation; we will automatically check out of the defense called and adjust with our "62 Will Line Bullets".

On Monday, as stated earlier, we show cutups of our opponent performing well. We want to make our opponent look like world beaters to keep our players focused on raising their level of expectations. Usually on Monday or Tuesday night, we will send our free safety and both inside linebackers home with one or two full games of the opponent. Both inside linebackers are keys to the intelligence of the defense and are each given a VHS tape for the season. They will take this tape how every week and return it on game night. We include the scouting tape and the tape of their last game to review.

Here are a few basic examples of how we play and game plan against certain offenses;

Wing T / Double Wing / Bone

Wing-T is built off the belly series and we look to stop that first and foremost. With double tight sets like this and the double wing, we prefer to feature our middle linebacker. To do this we use our "62" front and may play more 2i alignment or "G" with our Nose. We want to take away the FB belly and make the center fight traffic and try to race the middle linebacker to make a block. With Wing-T and double-wing teams, we can usually game plan by calling strength away from the featured wingback and either slant to or away from strength. Repping guard and tackle reactions is a must. We attempt to get our linebackers to completely forget back flow and respond and flow to guard reactions. For our outside linebackers, when the nearside guard pulls away, we have them immediately shoot / run-through to the opposite A gap. If the guard pulls toward our perimeter, we look to shoot / run-through to the nearside D gap off the hip of our defensive end. The reads of the corners in cover 2 rely on the wing. If wing bellies away, we have him get depth and get width, anticipating rumble, cutback, or cross buck. If wing bellies toward the force player, we have him anticipate sweep and play aggressively to take on sweep immediately and force the runner inside.

Our middle linebacker is primarily thinking between the tackle play. If a guard pulls we want him to slow play it and anticipate trap. Once he sees the ear hole of the guard, we condition him to shoot / run-through the opposite A gap. Because we are playing a two-deep safety behind this front, we have had tremendous success in sending the middle linebacker frequently to disrupt the backfield movement of the wing and /or any pulling guards.

Pro I

With pro I teams, we know we will have to stop two fundamental plays in the Power and the Iso. We have been successful utilizing our loaded zone "6" and our "Under" fronts to combat these offenses. With the "Under" front, we can force the Iso to be run to the strong side bubble. We teach our strong 9 technique to look aggressively play the tight end and play his first step. If the tight end releases vertically for pass, we walk to be physical with him and molest him for a distance of 4 yards before dropping to our curl zone and dumping him off to the free safety or strong side inside linebacker. If he arc releases, we want to string out the tight end, keeping our outside shoulder free, and forcing the runner to spill outside. We do not want to play this too quickly and allow the runner to cut inside us. If the tight end blocks down, we want to strike him in the rear kidney with our inside arm and look to spill the loading fullback or pulling backside guard on power. We do this by 'wrong arming', taking our outside arm and aiming for the thigh board of the up

field leg of the blocker. In doing so, we spill the ball carrier early, bowing his path allowing our speed on defense to swarm him. We play our "6", "62", and "Robber" coverages against pro I offenses. Pro I teams typically use BOB or slide pass protections, so we will work 4-to-one-side overload blitzes. We coach our Edges and outside linebackers to utilize a speed rush and anticipate a back to lunge forward on us due to their typical inexperience in blitz pickup. For our faster blitzes, we have them rep an "ole" / counter move to get the back to commit early. We also focus on speed rushing the outside blocker, by looking to beat the blocker with our first two steps. Get the blocker to reach us, and then fight immediately for the top pad of their outside shoulder. We punch with the outside arm, get his shoulders turned, then work an explosive rip (sending the bicep of the rip arm to the ear hole of the blocker) with our inside arm with the inside leg.

Ace

Since most styles of teams that feature the Ace formation we face rely on speed more so than power, we routinely are defending zone, jet sweep, and trap. We like our matchup in our "6" loaded zone to the tight end. Again, because the linebacker is essentially playing over the center, we feel that our middle linebacker should be free to make plays inside the tackles making the center have to run him down or give an advantage to one of defensive linemen. Because of our aggressive nature, we rep run-throughs and fits with our front 7 routinely which aides in our defense of inside / outside zone offenses.

Double tight Ace formations, we will play Cover 4 to be balanced and play the deep vertical threats, while getting aggressive run support play from our safeties.

Spread / Gun

The spread is predicated on 3 step routes beating Cover 3 teams. We like to not get out of our base packages, trying to change everything in one week to face a unique offensive threat. We would prefer to sit back in zone coverage and allow a substituted GATA package disrupt the timing and confidence of the quarterback. Depending on the comfort zone of our opponent (favorite plays) each spread team will require more thought into the coverage game plan. Depending on the matchup situation, we have opted to use Man free coverage and blitz a linebacker to ensure that momentum remains on the defensive side.

Trips

Because so many teams rely on trips formations to create rubs and run quick toss, we game plan against trips with as much support as possible by checking to our Cover 3. Whenever we see three to a side, we want to get our best pass defenders on that side, so we call strength away from the passing numbers (trips) to ensure the best personnel matchups and minimize our liabilities. With teams that have a strong toss game or boot action, we have given an AFC to go "WIDE" allowing our 9 technique pass rushing edge player a better opportunity to limit the ability of the offense get to the perimeter.

Thank you again for allowing me to share some of the things that have allowed our defenses to be successful and remain simple for our athletes. If you have any questions or comments that I can be of further assistance to you, feel free to contact me at mjbrophy@netexpress.net .